THE LAST SPEECHES OF Thomas Wentworth,

Late *Earle* of *Strafford*, and *Deputy* of

IRELAND.

The one in the Tower, the other on the SCAFFOLD ON Tower-Hill, *May* the twelfth. 1641.

Together with his deportment before and at the end of his Execution.

London printed, 1641.

His Speech in the Tower to the Lords,

before he went to Execution.

RIght Honourable, and the reſt, you are now come to convey me to my death: I am willing to die, which is a thing no more than all our Predeceſſors have done, and a debt that our Poſterity muſt in their due time diſcharge, which ſince it can be no way avoyded, it ought the leſſe to be feared; for that which is common to all, ought not to be intollerable to any: It is the Law of Nature, the tribute of the fleſh, remedy from all worldly cares and troubles; and to the truly penitent, a perfect path to bleſſednelſe. And there is but one death, though ſeverall wayes unto it: mine is not naturall, but enforced by the Law and Iuſtice: It hath been ſaid that the Lawes vex onely the meaner ſort of people, but the mighty are able to defend them: it is not ſo with me, for to the Law I ſubmit my ſelfe, and confeſſe that I receive nothing but Iuſtice: for he that politikly intendeth good to a Common-weale, may be called a juſt man, but he that practiſeth either for his owne profit, or any other ſiniſter ends, may be well tearmed a delinquent perſon; neither is delay in puniſhment any priviledge for pardon. And moreover, I ingenuouſly confeſſe with *Cicero*, That the death of the bad is the ſafety of the good that be alive.

Let no man truſt either in the favour of his Prince, the friendſhip and conſanguinity of his Peeres, much leſſe in his owne wiſedome and knowledge, of which I ingenuouſly confeſſe I have been too confident. Kings, as they are men before God, ſo they are Gods before men, and I may ſay with a great man once in this Kingdome, *Had I ſtrived to obey my God as faithfully, as I ſought to honour my King diligently, I had ſtood, and not fallen.* Moſt happy and fortunate is that Prince, who is as much for his juſtice feared, as for his goodneſſe beloved: For the greater that Princes are in power above other, the more they ought in vertue to excell other; and ſuch is the Royall Soveraigne whom I late ſerved.

For my Peeres, the correſpondence that I had with them during my proſperity, was to me very delightfull and pleaſing, and here they have commiſerated my ruine, I have plentifully found, who (for the moſt generous of them) I may boldly ſay, though they have deteſted the fact, yet they have pitied the perſon delinquent; the firſt in their loyalty, the laſt in their Charity: ingenuouſly confeſſing, that never any ſub-

ject, or Peere of my rank, had ever that helpe of Counsell, that benefit of time, or a more free and legall tryall than I have had: in the like whereof, none of my predecessors hath had so much favour from his Prince, so much sufferance from the people; in which I comprehend the understanding Commons, not the many headed Monster, Multitude: But I have offended, am sentenced, and must now suffer.

And for my too much confidence in my supposed wisdom & knowledge, therein have bin the most deceived: for he is wise to himself, that knowes by others faults to correct his owne offences: to be truely wise is to be Secretaries to our selves; for it is meere folly to reveale our intimate thoughts to strangers: wisdom is the most precious Gem with which the mind can be adorned, and learning the most famous thing for which a man ought to be esteemed, and true wisdome teacheth us to doe well, as to speake well: in the first I have failed, for *the wisdome of man is foolishnesse with God.*

For knowledge, it is a thing indifferent both to good and evill, but the best knowledge is for a man to know himselfe; hee that doth so shall esteeme of himselfe but little, for he considereth from whence hee came, and whereto he must goe, he regardeth not the vaine pleasures of this life, he exalteth God, and strives to live in his feare; but hee that knoweth not himselfe, is wilfull in his own wayes, unprofitable in his life, unfortunate in his death, and so am I. But the reason why I sought to attaine unto it, was this: I have read that he that knoweth not that which he ought to know, is a bruit beast among men; hee that knoweth more than he ought to know, is a man amongst beasts: but hee that knoweth all that may be known, is a God amongst men. To this I much aspired, in this I much failed; *Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity.*

I have heard the people clamour and cry out, saying, That through my occasion the times are bad, I wish that when I am dead they may prove better: most true it is, that there is at this time a great storme impending (God in his mercy avert it.) And since it is my particular lot, like *Ionah*, to be cast into the sea, I shall thinke my life well spent, to appease Gods wrath, and satisfie the peoples malice.

O what is eloquence more than ayre? fashioned with an articulate and distinct sound, when it is a speciall vertue to speake little and well, and silence is oft the best Oratory; for fools in their dumbnesse may be accounted wise: It hath power to make a good matter seeme bad, and a bad cause appeare good: but mine was to me unprofitable, and like the Cypresse trees, which are great and tall, but altogether without fruit.

What is honour? but the first step to disquietnesse, and power is still

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waited on by envy, neither hath it any priviledge against infamy. It is held to be the chiefe part of honour, for a man to joyne to his office and calling, curteſie and affability, commiſeration and pitty: for thereby he draweth to him with a kind of compulſion, the hearts of the multitude. But that was the leaſt part of my ſtudy, which now makes me call to minde, that the greater the perſons are in authority, the ſooner they are catcht in any delinquency, and their ſmalleſt crimes are thought to be Capitall, the ſmalleſt ſpot ſeems great in the fineſt linen, and the leaſt flaw is ſooneſt found in the richeſt Diamond. But high and Noble ſpirits finding themſelves wounded, grieve not ſo much at their owne paine and perplexity, as at the deriſion and ſcoffes of their enemy: but for mine own part, though I might have many in my life, I hope to find none in my death.

Amongſt other things which pollute and contaminate the minds of great ſpirits, there is none more hainous then Ambition, which is ſeldome nuacompanied with Avarice: Such to poſſeſſe their ends, care not to violate the Lawes of Religion, and Reaſon, and to breake the bonds of Modeſty and Equity, with the neareſt tyes of Conſanguinity, and Amity; of which as I have beene guilty, ſo I crave at Gods hands forgiveneſſe. It is a Maxime in Philoſophy, that ambitious men can be never good Counſellors to Princes; the deſire of having more is common to great Lords, and a deſire of Rule a great cauſe of their Ruine.

My Lords, I am now the hopeleſſe Preſident, may I be to you all an happy example: For Ambition devoureth gold, and drinketh blood, and climbeth ſo high by other mens heads, that at the length in the fall, it breaketh its owne neck: therefore it is better to live in humble content, than in high care and trouble: For more precious is want with honeſty, than wealth with infamy: For what are we but meere Vapours, which in a ſerene Element aſcend high, and upon an inſtant, like Smoake vaniſh into nothing: or like ſhips without Pilots, toſt up and downe upon the Seas by contrary winds and tempeſts. But the good husbandman thinkes better of thoſe eares of Corne, which bow down, and grow crooked, than thoſe which are ſtraight and upright, becauſe he is aſſured to finde more ſtore of Grain in the one than in the other. This all men know, yet of this, how few make uſe: The defect whereof muſt be now my pain: may my ſuffering prove to others profit.

For what hath now the favour of my Prince, the familiarity with my Peeres, the volubility of a tongue, the ſtrength of my memory, my learning, or knowledge, my honours, or Offices, my power, and potency, my riches, and treaſure, (all theſe the ſpeciall gifts, both of Nature, and Fortune) what have all theſe profited me? Bleſſings I ac-

knowledge, though by God bestowed upon man, yet not all of them togeather upon many: yet by the divine Providence, the most of them met in me: of which had I made happy use, I might still have flourisht, who now am forced immaturely to fall.

I now could wish, (but that *utinam* is too late) that God with his outward goodnesse towards me had so commixed his inward grace, that I had chused the *medium* path, neither inclining to the right hand, nor deviating to the left; but like *Icarus* with my waxen wings, fearing by too low a flight to moisten them with the Waves: I soared too high, and too neare the Sun, by which they being melted, I aiming at the highest, am precipitated to the lowest, and am made a wretched prey to the Waters: But I who before built my house upon the sand, have now setled my hopes upon the Rock my Saviour: by whose only merits my sole trust is, that whatsoever becomes of my body, yet in this bosome my soule may be sanctuaried.

Nimrod would have built a Tower to reach up to heaven, and called it *Babel*; but God turned it to the confusion of Languages, and dissipation of the people. *Pharaoh* kept the children of *Israel* in Bondage and after having freed them, in his great pride would have made them his prey; but God gave them a dry and miraculous passage, and *Pharaoh* and his hoast a watry Sepulchre. *Belshazzer* feasted his Princes and Prostitutes, who drunke healths in the Vessels taken from the Temple, but the hand of God writ upon the wall, *Mene, Tekel, Phoras*, and that night before morning, was both his kingdome and life taken from him: Thus God lets men go on a great while in their own devices, but in the end it proves their own ruine and destruction, never suffering them to effect their desired purposes: therefore let none presume upon his power, glory in his greatnesse, or be too confident in his riches: These things were written for our Instruction, of which the living may make use, the dying cannot; but wit and unfruitfull wisdome are the next neighbours to folly.

There can be no greater vanity in the world, than to esteeme the world, which regardeth no man; and to make slight account of God who greatly respecteth all men; and there can be no greater folly in man, than by much Travell to encrease his goods, and pamper his body, and in the interim with vain delights and pleasures, to lose his soul. It is a great folly in any man to attempt a bad beginning, in hope of good ending; and to make that proper to one, which was before common to all, is meere indiscretion, and the beginning of discord, which I positively wish may end in this my punishment.

O how small a proportion of earth will containe my body, when my

my high minde could not be confined within the ſpacious compaſſe of two Kingdomes? But my houre draweth on, and I conclude with the Pſalmiſt, not aiming at any one man in particular, but ſpeaking for all in generall: *How long will you Judges be corrupted? how long will yee ceaſe to give true Judgement? &c. Bleſſed is the man that doth not walke in the Councell of the wicked, nor ſtand in the way of ſinners, nor ſit in the ſeat of the ſcornfull, therefore they ſhall not ſtand in the Judgement, nor ſinners in the aſſembly of the righteous, &c.*

About the houre of twelve a clock the aforeſaid Lord of *Strafford* was conveyed to the Scaffold on Tower hill, where was a Court of Guard made by the ſeverall Companies of the Souldiers of the City of *London*, and the Hamlets of the Tower on each ſide as he paſſed to the Scaffold: before marched the Marſhals men to make way, then the Sheriffes of Londons Officers with their Halberds; after them the Kings Guard, or Warders of the Tower; Next came one of his Gentlemen, bare headed, in mourning habit, the Lord *Strafford* following him clad in black Cloth, with divers others in the ſame habit, which were his attendants; then the Lord Biſhop of *Armagh*, and other good Divines; with the Sheriffes of London, and divers honourable perſonages.

When he came to the Scaffold, he there ſhewed himſelfe on each ſide in full view to all people, and made this ſhort ſpeech, with as much alacrity of ſpirit, as a mortall man could expreſſe, *viz.*

The Earle *of Straffords firſt Speech on the Scaffold.*

MY Lord Primate of *Ireland* (and my Lords, and the reſt of theſe Gentlemen) it is a very great comfort to me, to have your Lordſhip by me this day, in regard I have been knowne to you a long time: I ſhould be very glad to obtain ſo much ſilence, as to be heard a few words, but I doubt I ſhall not; my Lord I come hither by the good will and pleaſure of Almighty God, to pay that laſt debt I owe to ſin, which is death, and by the bleſſing of that God to riſe again through the merits of Chriſt Jeſus to eternall glory; I wiſh I had been private, that I might have been heard; My Lord, if I might bee ſo much beholding

beholding to you, that I might uſe a few words, I ſhould take it for a very great curteſie; My Lord, I come hither to ſubmit to that judgement which hath paſt againſt me, I doe it with a very quiet and contented minde, I doe freely forgive all the world, a forgiveneſſe that is not ſpoken from teeth outward (as they ſay) but from the heart; I ſpeake it in the preſence of Almighty God, before whom I ſtand, that there is not ſo much as a diſpleaſing thought in mee ariſing to any creature; I thanke God I may ſay truly, and my Conſcience beares me witneſſe, that in all my ſervices ſince I have had the honour to ſerve his Majeſty in any employment, I never had any thing in my heart, but the joynt and individuall proſperity of King and People; if it have been my hap to be miſconſtrued, it is the common portion of us all while we are in this life, the righteous judgement is hereafter, here we are ſubject to error, and apt to be misjudged one of another; there is one thing I deſire to cleere my ſelfe of, and I am very confident, I ſpeake it with ſo much clearneſſe, that I hope I ſhall have your Chriſtian charity in the beliefe of it; I did alwaies ever thinke the Parliaments of England, were the happieſt Conſtitutions that any Kingdome, or any Nation lived under, and under God the meanes of making King and People happy, ſo far have I been from being againſt Parliaments; for my death, I here acquit all the world, and pray God heartily to forgive them; and in particular, my Lord Primate, I am very glad that his Majeſty is pleaſed to conceive me not meriting ſo ſevere, and heavy a puniſhment as the utmoſt execution of this ſentence; I am very glad, and infinitely rejoyce in this mercy of his, and beſeech God to turne it to him, that he may finde mercy when he hath moſt need of it; I wiſh this Kingdome all the proſperity and happineſſe in the world: I did it living, and now dying it is my wiſh, I doe now profeſſe it from my heart, and doe moſt humbly recommend it unto every man here, and wiſh every man to

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lay his hand upon his heart, and consider seriously whether the beginning of the happinesse of a People should bee written in letters of Blood, I feare you are in a wrong way, and I desire Almighty God that no one drop of my Blood may rise up in judgement against you.

(My Lord,) I professe my selfe a true and obedient Son to the *Church* of *England*, to that *Church* wherein I was borne, and wherein I was bred; *prosperity* and *happinesse*, be ever to it: and whereas it hath been said that I have enclin'd to Popery, if it be an Objection worth answering, let me say truly, that from the time since I was one and twenty yeares of age, till this houre, now going upon 49. I never had thought in my heart, to doubt of the truth of my Religion in *England*: and never any had the boldnesse to suggest to me the contrary, to the best of my remembrance; and so being reconciled to the mercies of *Christ Iesus* my Saviour, into whose bosome I hope shortly to be gather'd to those eternall happinesses that shall never have end. I desire heartily the forgivenesse of every man, both for any rash or unadvised word, or deed, and desire your Prayers: And so my Lords farewell, farewell all the things of this world, LORD strengthen my faith, give me confidence and assurance in the merits of *Christ Iesus*. I desire you that you would be silent and joyne in Prayers with me; and I trust in GOD that we shall all meet and live eternally in Heaven, there to receive the accomplishment of all happinesse, where every teare shall be wiped from our eyes, and every sad thought from our hearts: And so God blesse this Kingdome, and *Iesus* have mercy upon my Soule.

THen turning himselfe about, he saluted all the Noblemen, and tooke a solemne leave of all considerable persons on the Scaffold, giving them his hand.

And after that he said, Gentlemen, I would say my prayers, and I intreat you all to pray with me, and for me; then his Chaplaine laid the booke of Common prayer upon the

Chaire before him as he kneeled down, on which he prayed almoſt a quarter of an houre, then he prayed as long or longer without a booke, and ended with the Lords prayer; then ſtanding up he ſpies his brother Sir *George Wentworth*, and calls him to him, and ſaith, brother wee muſt part, remember me to my ſiſter, and to my wife, and carry my bleſſing to my eldeſt Son, and charge him from mee, that he feare God and continue an obedient Sonne of the Church of England, and that he ſhould approve himſelfe a faithfull ſubject to the King, and tell him that he ſhould not have any private grudge or revenge towards any concerning me, and bid him beware that he meddle not with Church livings, for that will prove a moath and canker to him in his eſtate, and wiſh him to content himſelfe to be a ſervant to his Countrey, as a Juſtice of peace in his County, and not aiming at higher preferments; carry my bleſſing alſo to my daughters, *Anne* and *Arrabella*, charge them to feare and ſerve God, and he will bleſſe them, not forgetting my little Infant that yet knowes neither good nor evill, and cannot ſpeake for it ſelfe, God ſpeake for it and bleſſe it; then ſaid he, now I have nigh done, one ſtroke will make my wife husbandleſſe, my deare children fatherleſſe, and my poore ſervants maſterleſſe, and ſeperate mee from my deare brother and all my friends, but let God be to you and them, all in all.

After that, going to take off his dublet, and to make himſelfe unready, he ſaid, *I thanke God I am no more afraid of death, nor daunted with any diſcouragements riſing from any feares, but doe as chearefully put off my dublet at this time, as ever I did when I went to bed.* Then he put off his dublet, and wound up his haire with his hands, and put on a white Cap.

Then he called, Where is the man that ſhould doe this laſt office? (meaning the Executioner) call him to mee. When he came and askt him forgiveneſſe, he told him hee forgave

forgave him and all the world. Then kneeling downe by the block, he went to prayer again himſelfe, the Biſhop of Armach kneeling on the one ſide, and the Miniſter on the other; to the which Miniſter after prayer he turned himſelfe, and ſpoke ſome few words ſoftly, having his hands lifted up: this Miniſter cloſed his hands with his; then bowing himſelfe to the earth to lay his head on the block, he told the Executioner that he would firſt lay downe his head to try the fitneſſe of the block, and take it up againe before he would lay it downe for good and all, and ſo hee did: and before he laid it downe againe, he told the Executioner that he would give him warning when to ſtrike, by ſtretching forth his hands; and then laid down his neck on the block, ſtretching out his hands, the Executioner ſtrucke off his head at one blow, then took the head up in his hands, and ſhewed it to all the people, and ſaid, *God ſave the King*.

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